

**James Madison to Thomas Wharton, August, 1827.  
Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,  
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,  
1900-1910.**

**TO THOMAS J. WHARTON. MAD. MSS.**

Montpr., Aug., 1827.

Dear Sir I have duly recd. the copy of your Oration on the 4th of July last. In making my acknowledgments, with the passage under my eye, ascribing to me "the first public proposal for the meeting of the Convention to which we are indebted for our present Constitution," it may be proper to state in a few words the part I had in bringing about that event.

Having witnessed, as a member of the Revolutionary Congress, the inadequacy of the Powers conferred by the "Articles of Confederation," and having become, after the expiration of my term of service there, a member of the Legislature of Virginia, I felt it to be my duty to spare no efforts to impress on that Body the alarming condition of the U. S. proceeding from that cause, and the evils threatened by delay, in applying a remedy. With this view, propositions were made vesting in Congress the necessary powers to regulate trade then suffering under the monopolising policy abroad, and State collisions at home, and to draw from that source the convenient revenue it was capable of yielding. The propositions tho' recd. with favorable attention, and at one moment agreed to in a crippled form, were finally frustrated or, rather abandoned. Such however were the impressions which the public discussions had made, that an alternative proposition which had been kept in reserve, being seasonably brought forward by a highly respected member, who

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having long served in the State Councils without participating in the federal had more the ear of the Legislature on that account, was adopted with little opposition. The proposition invited the other States to concur with Virginia in a Convention of Deputies commissioned to devise & report a uniform system of commercial regulations. Commissioners on the part of the State were at the same time appointed myself of the number. The Convention proposed took place at Annapolis in August, 1786. Being however very partially attended, and it appearing to the members that a rapid progress, aided by the experiment on foot, had been made in ripening the public mind for a radical reform of the Federal polity, they determined to waive the object for which they were appointed, and recommend a Convention with enlarged Powers to be held, the year following in the city of Philada. The Legislature of Virga. happened to be the first that *acted on* the recommendation, and being a member, the only one of the attending Commissioners at Annapolis, who was so, my best exertions were used in promoting a compliance with it, and in giving to the example the most conciliating form, & all the weight that could be derived from a list of deputies having the name of Washington at its head.

In what is here said of the agency of Virginia and of myself particularly, it is to be understood that no comparison is intended that can derogate from what occurred elsewhere, and may, of course, be less known to me than what is here stated.

I pray you, Sir, to pardon this intrusive explanation, with which I tender you my respectful salutations.